



**Congressman**

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**OPENING REMARKS – REP. McHUGH**  
**MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING**  
**IMPLEMENTATION OF TRICARE BENEFITS FOR MEDICARE ELIGIBLE MILITARY**  
**BENEFICIARIES**

Good afternoon. This hearing of the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the House Committee on Armed Services will come to order. I am delighted to be joined at the dais by my colleague and ranking member, Mr. Meehan. I look forward to working with you to continue the bipartisan work of this subcommittee.

Enactment of the fiscal year 2001 National Defense Authorization Act restored TRICARE benefits to Medicare eligible military retirees and set in motion the most significant expansion of military health care since the enactment of the original CHAMPUS program in 1966. This restoration of TRICARE benefits moved the nation closer to “keeping the promise” of lifetime healthcare for military personnel and their families. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1.5 million retirees will become eligible for a comprehensive prescription drugs benefit that will give retirees several options for accessing prescription medications. First, they will continue to be able to use the military treatment facility pharmacies. They will also, for the first time, be able to get their prescriptions filled using the Department of Defense mail order pharmacy service. When neither of these points of access meets their needs they can use network and out of network retail pharmacies.

The remainder of the benefits Congress restored will become effective October 1<sup>st</sup> with the activation of the “TRICARE For Life” benefit. Under this program TRICARE will operate as a premium free supplement to Medicare. TRICARE will also be the first payer services covered by TRICARE and not by Medicare. The benefits will also be available overseas.

The responsibility for implementing these benefits rests with the Department of Defense and is dependent on the cooperation of several agencies.

In today’s hearing we will examine the plans and progress to date in implementing these long anticipated benefits. Today we will receive testimony from the senior managers of the Department of Defense TRICARE program and the Health Care Financing Administration, the key people responsible for insuring a smooth implementation of the TRICARE For Life benefits. We will also hear from the organizations that represent large numbers of active and retired military personnel and their families. They will tell us what they are hearing from their members about the implementation process and what actions their organizations are taking to educate senior retirees about these new benefits.

We are anxious to hear each of your testimony. We do have another panel of witnesses so I would ask you to summarize your written testimony and to limit your opening remarks to five minutes. Your written statements will be included in the record in their entirety.

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